

Subjunctive Mood in “If clauses” and “I wish...” Statements

Definition

Certain phrases in English require the use of the subjunctive mood which indicates a hypothetical or imaginary state contrary to reality. There are various uses of this mood in the past present and future. The most common two examples and perhaps the most common subjunctive mistakes are found in “if clauses” and “I wish that...” statements.

Grade Level Targeted

I would present this work sheet to a grade 9 academic class. This is a common mistake to fix (subjunctive instead of indicative), and these are often used in writing and even informal speaking. That being said, any class could benefit from this sheet.

Common Errors and Corrections

People often use the indicative mood in an “if clause” instead of the subjunctive mood. For example:

Incorrect > If I **was** at the beach, I would be happier.

Correct > If I **were** at the beach, I would be happier.

Incorrect > I wish I **was** at the beach.

Correct > I wish I **were** at the beach.

The verb “to be” in the subjunctive is *a/ways* conjugated in the third person plural (that is, what would come after “they”). There are other uses of subjunctive. However, to keep it simple, these two common errors will be focussed on.

Activity

Ask students questions like:

“You are now famous. What would you do?” You must answer this question in a complete sentence beginning with “If I...”.

Resources

Nordquist, Richard. (n.d.). Subjunctive Mood. *About.com Grammar and Composition*. Retrieved January 24, 2012, from <http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/subjuncterm05.htm>.

Subjunctive Mood

Certain phrases in English require the use of the subjunctive mood which indicates a hypothetical or imaginary state contrary to reality.

Here are two common examples where we sometimes forget to use the subjunctive mood:

1. With the verb “to be” in an “if clause”

Incorrect > If I **was** at the beach, I would be happier.

Correct > If I **were** at the beach, I would be happier.

2. In an “I wish (that)...” statement

Incorrect > She wishes she **was** at the beach.

Correct > She wishes she **were** at the beach.

Always conjugate the verb “to be” in the 3rd person plural “**were**” regardless of the noun/pronoun which precedes it.

*****Fill in the blanks** with the verb “to be”. SOME of these are subjunctive and some are not:

1. I wish that I _____ at the beach.
2. Sometimes I think that if my friends _____ less hungry all the time, I would spend less money on food.
3. I think that I _____ beautiful.
4. If those people in the library _____ not so loud, I could get more work done.
5. I wish my cat _____ less destructive of my furniture.
6. I wonder if I _____ tired enough to go to sleep. (Note: Is this an “if clause”? Or a complete sentence?)